Act 31
A Smile (First Half)

SHE'S SO PRECOCIOUS FOR TWO AND A HALF MONTHS.
HEE HEE. SOON ENOUGH SHE'LL BE LIFTING HER HEAD.
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...HM? IS SOME-THING WRONG?
YOUR HAIR'S GONE FROM SILVER TO WHITE.

ELEO-NORE NEEDS HER MOTHER AT FULL STRENGTH, YOU KNOW!
OF COURSE, DEAR. BUT...
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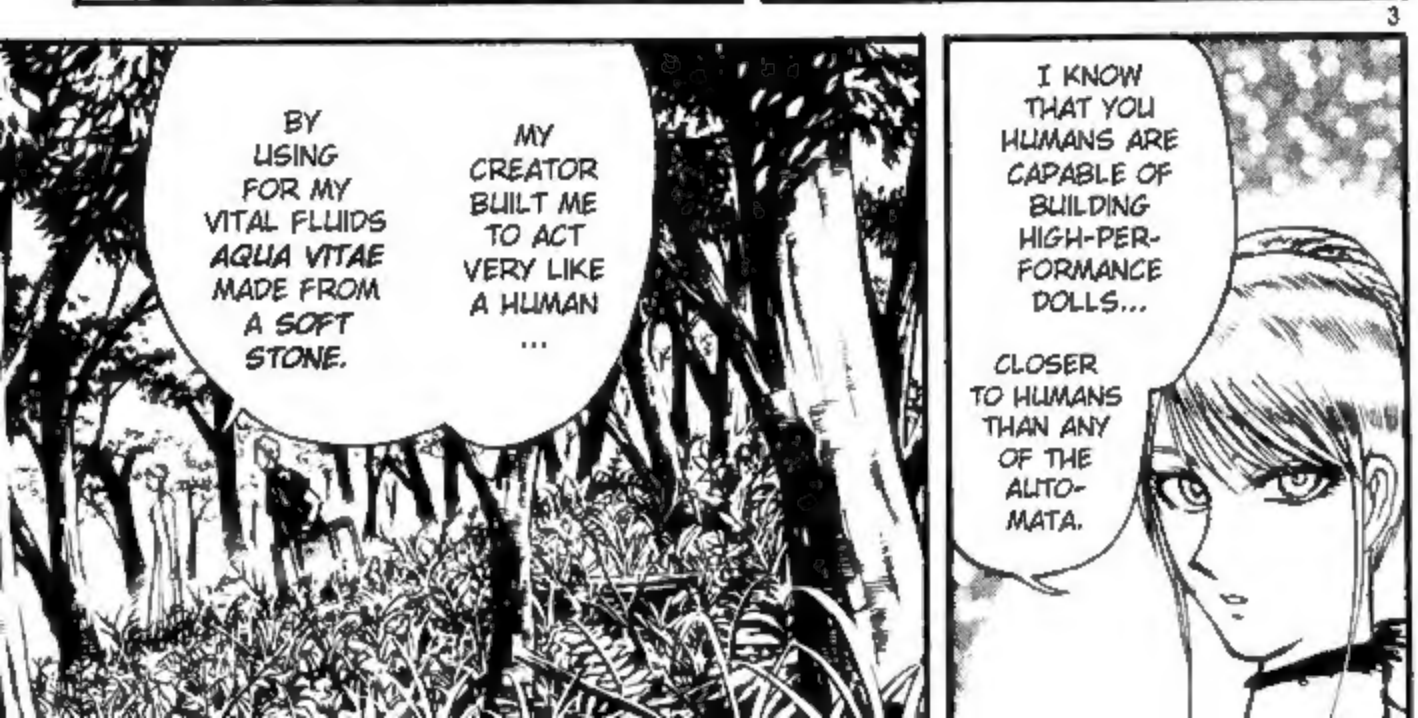
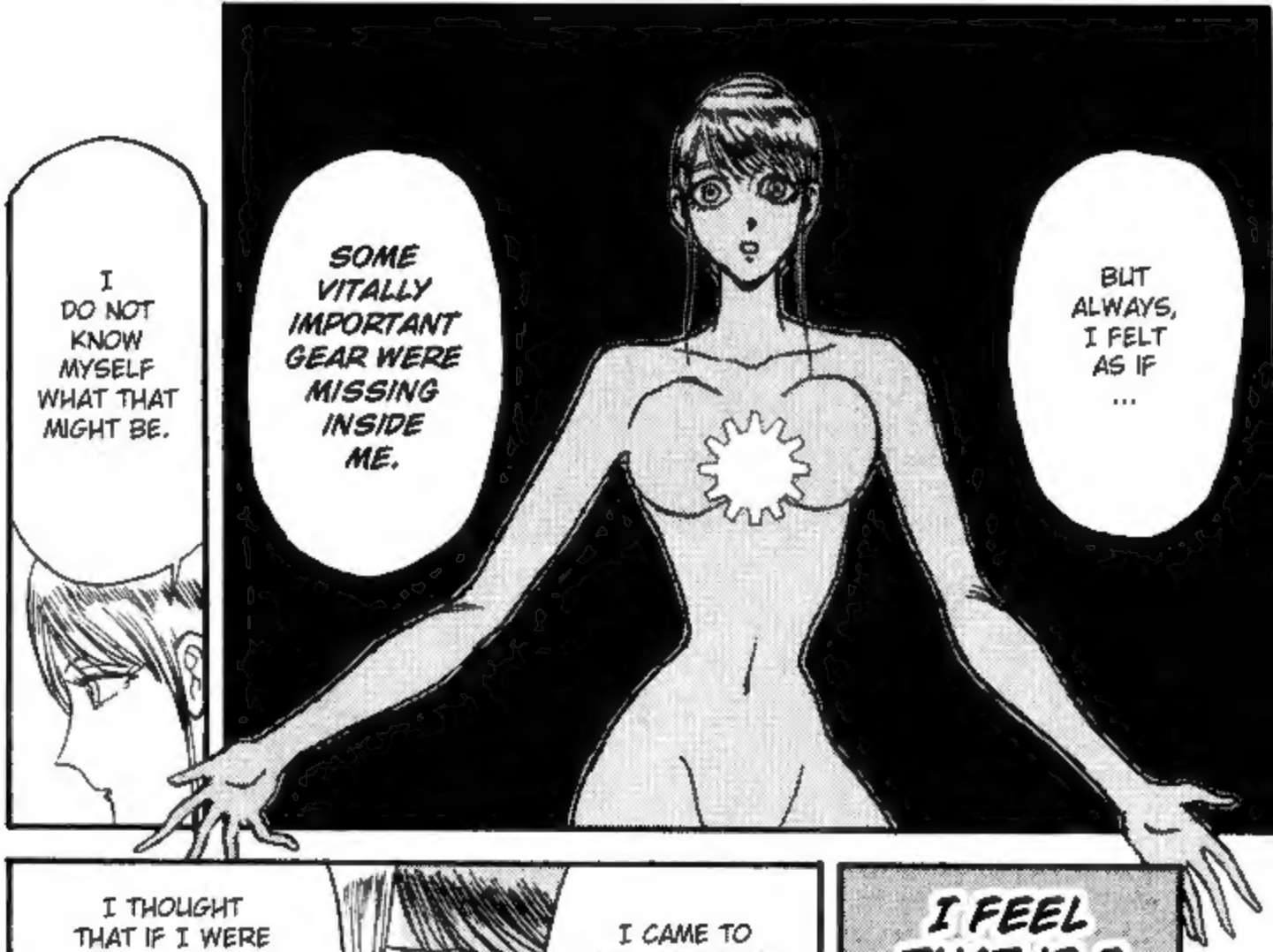
PERHAPS. BUT DOESN'T EVERY MOTHER DO THAT?
IT'S AS IF YOU'VE GIVEN HALF YOUR LIFE FORCE TO ELEONORE.
PUFF

...!?
I DON'T THINK THAT WAS ALL I GAVE TO ELEONORE.

YOU'RE THE ENEMY. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHEN YOU MIGHT BE PLANNING TO ATTACK US.
IF YOU HAVE SOME PLAN HERE, SPIT IT OUT. THIS IS AN INTERRO-GATION.
WHY DID I WANT ANGELINA TO DIS-MANTLE ME, YOU ASK...?


BY USING FOR MY VITAL FLUIDS *AQUA VITAE* MADE FROM A *SOFT STONE.*
MY CREATOR BUILT ME TO ACT VERY LIKE A HUMAN ...
I KNOW THAT YOU HUMANS ARE CAPABLE OF BUILDING HIGH-PER-FORMANCE DOLLS...
CLOSER TO HUMANS THAN ANY OF THE ALITO-MATA.


I DO NOT KNOW MYSELF WHAT THAT MIGHT BE.
SOME VITALLY IMPORTANT GEAR WERE MISSING INSIDE ME.
BUT ALWAYS, I FELT AS IF ...

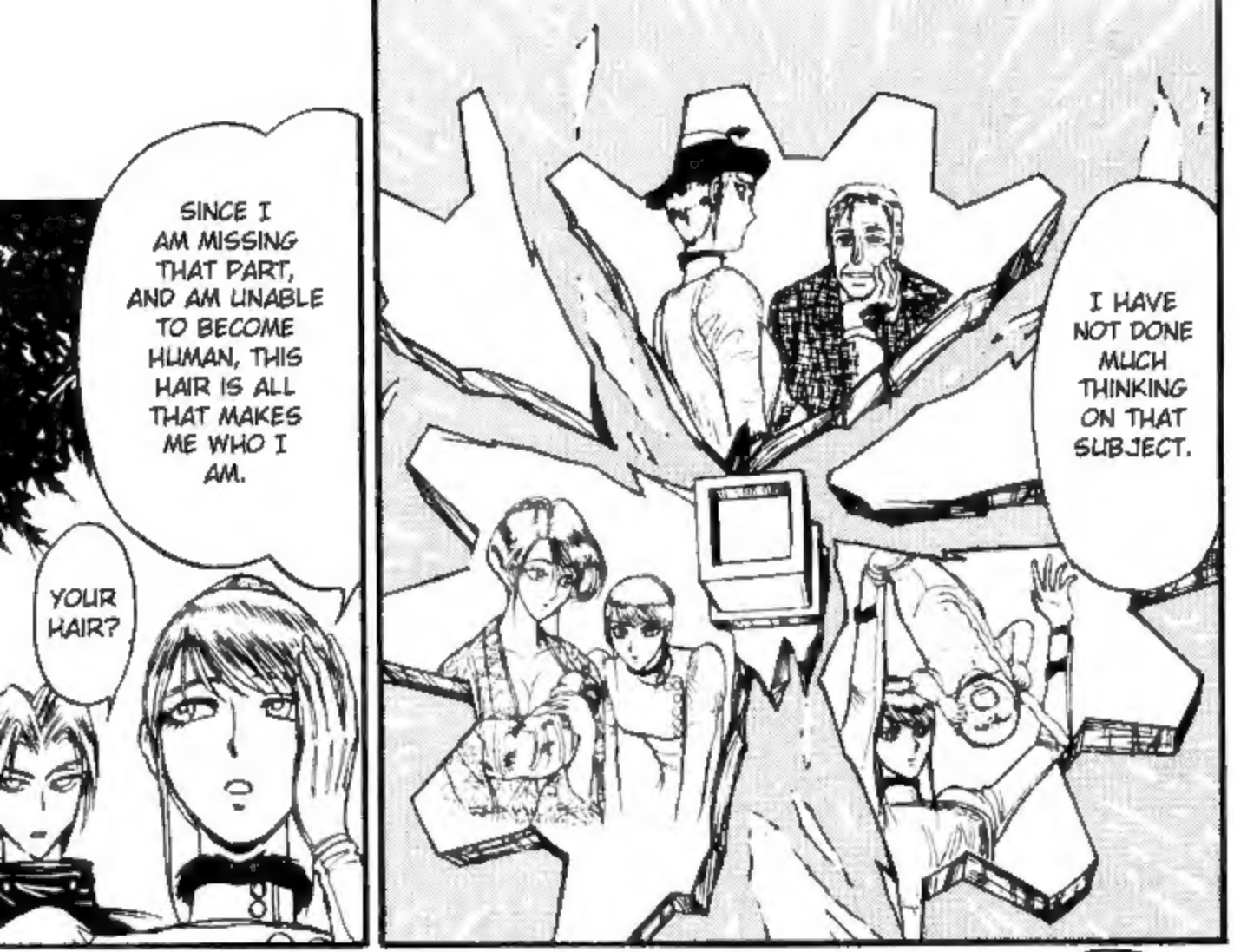
I THOUGHT THAT IF I WERE TO MEET WITH A HUMAN WHO BUILDS PUPPETS, THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO TELL ME WHAT THAT GEAR IS...
I CAME TO THE SHIROGANE IN JAPAN WITH THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF BEING DISMANTLED.

I FEEL THAT IF I ONLY HAD IT, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO CHANGE...

YES. I SAW HER SIGNATURE ON PART OF A SHIROGANE'S PUPPET.
HMPH. I SEE. SO YOU CAME HERE TO SEE ANGELINA.

HERE IN JAPAN ...
SINCE I'VE BEEN ...

...NO. BUT, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...
AND? HAVE YOU LEARNED WHAT YOUR MISSING PART IS?


SINCE I AM MISSING THAT PART, AND AM UNABLE TO BECOME HUMAN, THIS HAIR IS ALL THAT MAKES ME WHO I AM.
YOUR HAIR?
I HAVE NOT DONE MUCH THINKING ON THAT SUBJECT.

SO THAT I MIGHT BE THAT WOMAN'S REINCARNATION.
IT IS THE HAIR OF THE HUMAN AFTER WHOM I WAS MODELED.
MY CREATOR PLACED IT ON MY HEAD WHEN HE BUILT ME.

I KNOW NOT HOW MANY TIMES I SAID THAT TO MYSELF.
MY HAIR IS REAL, THEREFORE I AM THE REAL FRANCINE.
SO I, WITH THIS HAIR, TRIED TO CONVINCE MYSELF THAT I WAS FRANCINE.
HOWEVER, SHE— FRANCINE— IS NO LONGER IN THIS WORLD.

AND SHE SQUEEZES MY FINGER TIGHT.
ELEO-NORE ...
CRIES NO MATTER WHETHER I AM MACHINE OR HUMAN.
BUT WHEN I'M NEAR THAT BABY, IT SEEMS AS IF SUCH THINGS NO LONGER MATTER.

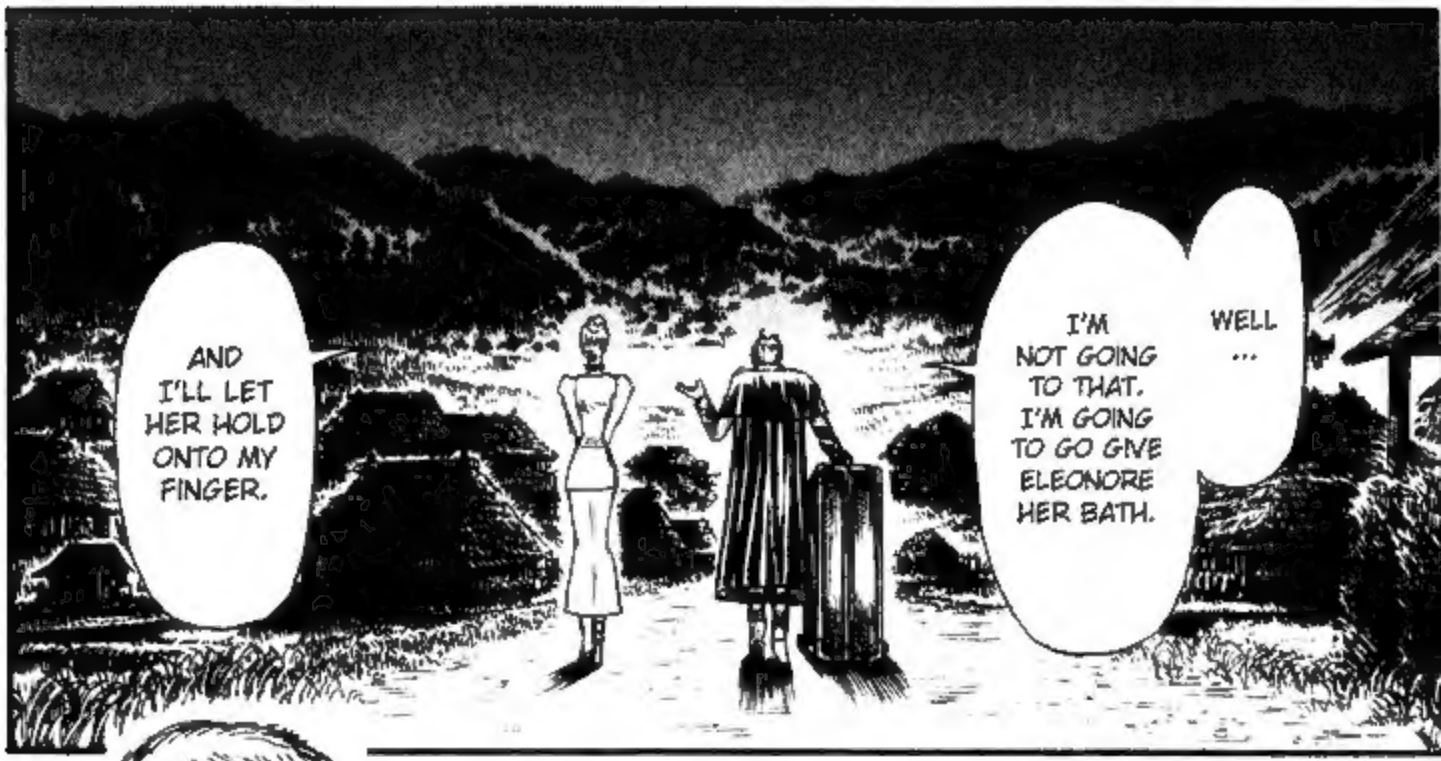
WELL, IF YOU WERE GOING TO KILL US, YOU PROBABLY WOULD HAVE DONE IT LONG AGO, WHILE ELEONORE WAS BEING BORN.
Hmph! What's that supposed to mean?
I FEEL AS IF I MIGHT FINALLY CHANGE.
WHEN I AM WITH ELEO-NORE ...
...IN-DEED.
BUT REMEMBER THIS: I HAVEN'T LET MY GUARD DOWN.
IN-DEED.

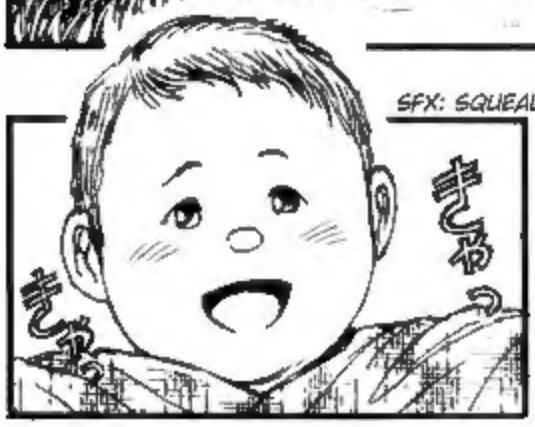
#7
#7

SFX: TALKING, COMMOTION

SHOUJI-SAMA'S INVITED US ALL TO THE BEST INN IN TOWN TONIGHT TO TREAT US TO A HUGE FEAST!
SURE IS! THIS IS FER THE ONE HAPPENIN' TONIGHT.
THIS HUGE TURNOUT IS ALL FOR SIGHTSEEING AT A FES-TIVAL?

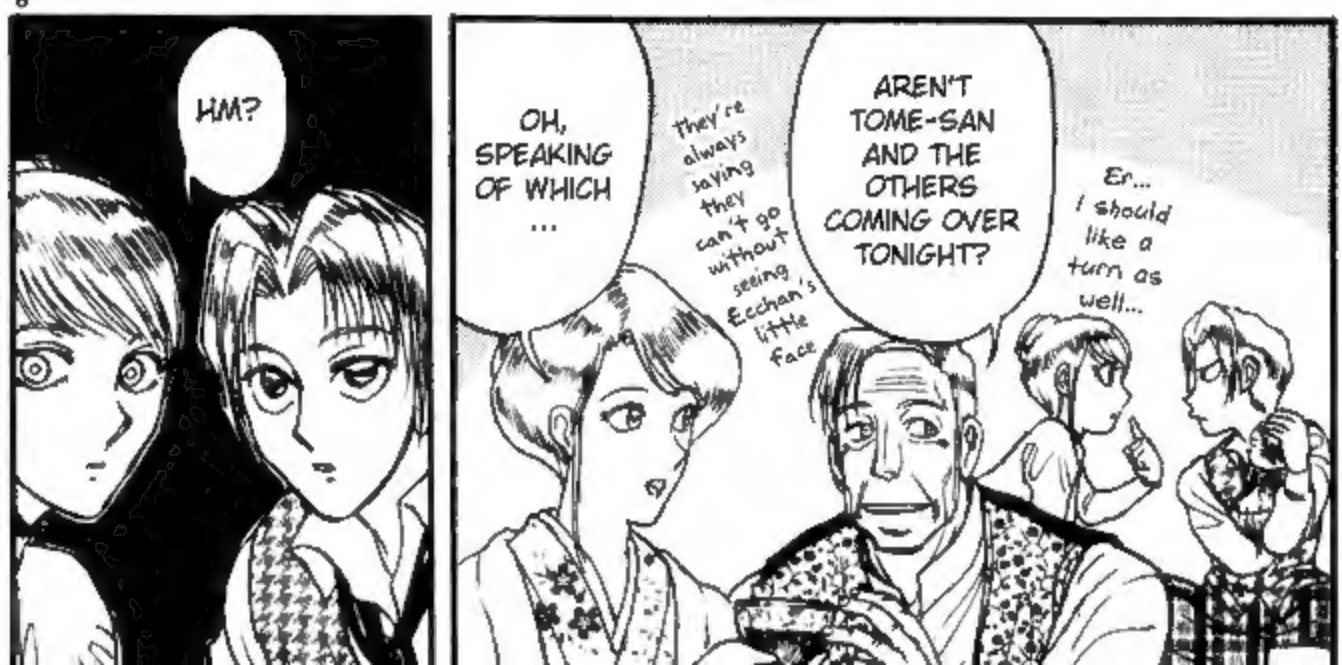
SEE YOU TWO THERE LATER!
WELL, ECCHAN 'N' HER MAMA CAIN'T COME, BUT THE MASTER IS, LATER ON.
DOES THAT MEAN ELEO-NORE TOO?
HMM. I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING ABOUT THAT.


AND I'LL LET HER HOLD ONTO MY FINGER.
I'M NOT GOING TO THAT. I'M GOING TO GO GIVE ELEONORE HER BATH.
WELL ...


SFX: SQUEALING

SFX: CRYING

WHO'S READY TO EAT?
YOU KNOW, YOU CAN GIVE HER TO ME ANY TIME, SHOUJI.
THERE WE GO! THERE'S A GOOD GIRL. LOOK AT THAT SMILE.


HM?
OH, SPEAKING OF WHICH ...
They're always saying they can't go without seeing Ecchan's little face
AREN'T TOME-SAN AND THE OTHERS COMING OVER TONIGHT?
Er... I should like a turn as well...

THIS IS THE FIRST WE'RE HEARING OF THAT, ISN'T IT?
OH, IS THAT SO?
WELL, THE VILLAGERS ...
ARE STILL AT THE FESTIVAL IN THE NEXT TOWN.
THE VILLAGE CERTAINLY IS QUIET TONIGHT.
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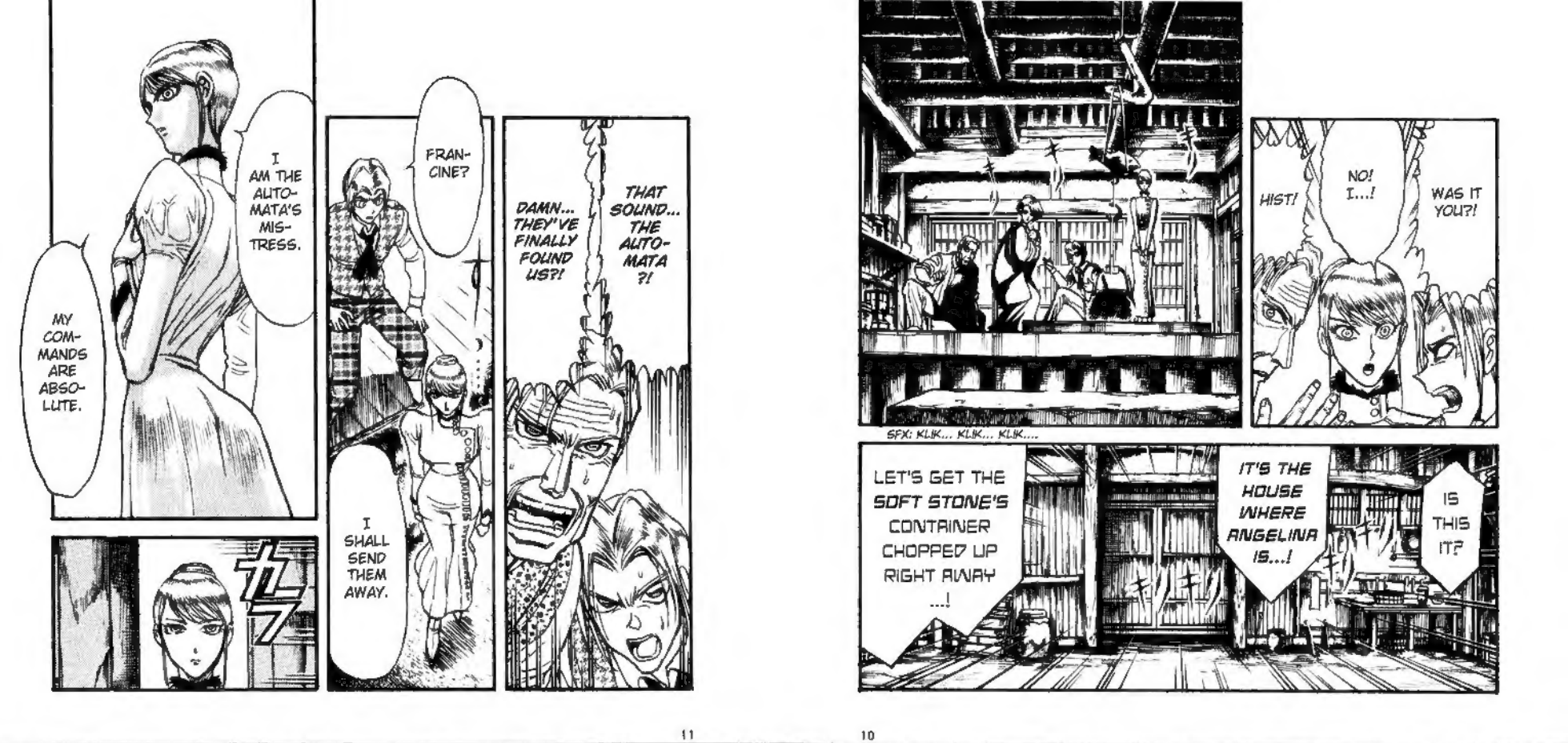
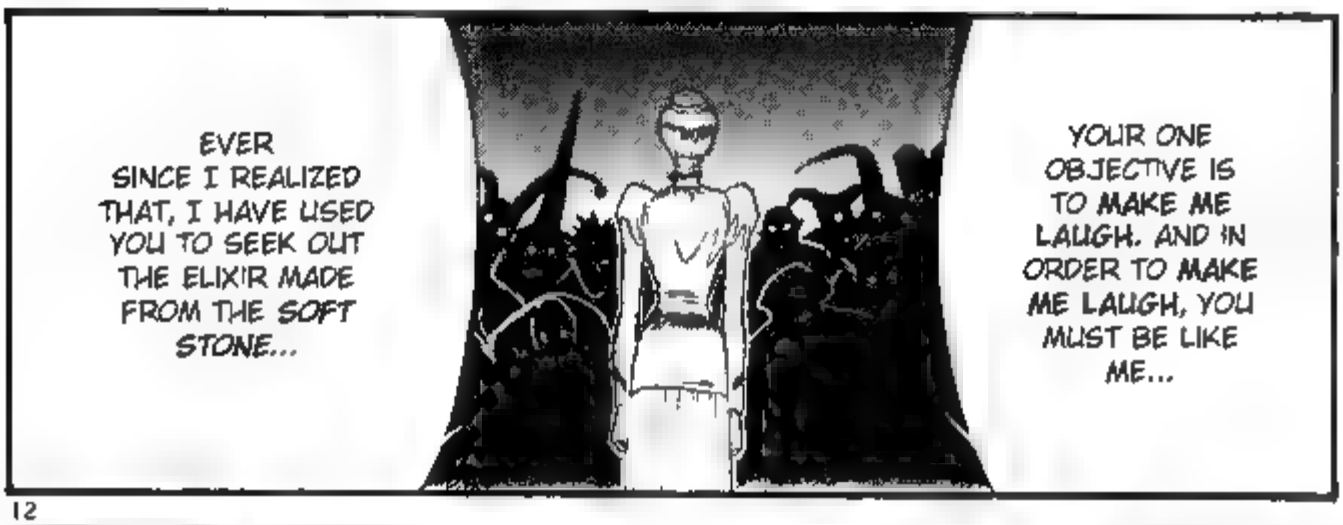
WHAT ...?
BUT... DIDN'T YOU TREAT THE ENTIRE VILLAGE TO A FEAST TODAY AT THE INN?
I NEVER TOLD THEM I WAS GOING TO DO THAT.
PERHAPS SOMEONE ARRANGED THIS IN ORDER TO GET US ALONE...
I KNOW, DEAR.
ANGELINA...
BUT THAT CAN'T BE!
WHO WAS IT, THEN?


I AM THE AUTO-MATA'S MIS-TRESS.
MY COM-MANDS ARE ABSO-LUTE.
FRAN-CINE?
I SHALL SEND THEM AWAY.
DAMN... THEY'VE FINALLY FOUND US?!
THAT SOUND... THE AUTO-MATA ?!
HIST!
NO! I...!
WAS IT YOU?!
SFX: KLIK... KLIK... KLIK....
LET'S GET THE SOFT STONE'S CONTAINER CHOPPED UP RIGHT AWAY ...!
IT'S THE HOUSE WHERE ANGELINA IS...!
IS THIS IT?

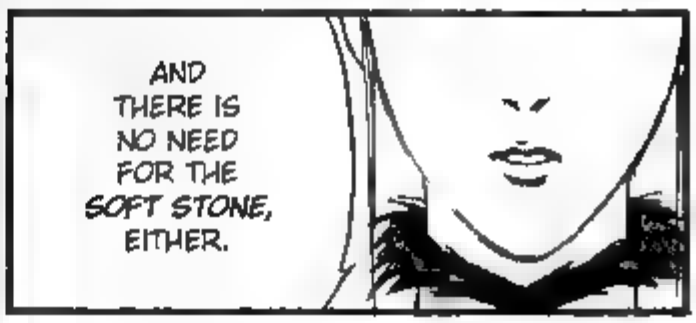
MY DEAR DOLLS... I AM MOST GRATEFUL FOR YOUR LOYALTY.
HOW ARE THERE SO MANY?!
THERE MUST BE 300!


EVER SINCE I REALIZED THAT, I HAVE USED YOU TO SEEK OUT THE ELIXIR MADE FROM THE SOFT STONE...
YOUR ONE OBJECTIVE IS TO MAKE ME LAUGH. AND IN ORDER TO MAKE ME LAUGH, YOU MUST BE LIKE ME...

12

TAKE YOUR LEAVE OF THIS PLACE.
I HEREBY ORDER YOU AS RING-MASTER OF THE MIDNIGHT CIRCUS.

THEREFORE, THERE IS NO NEED FOR YOU TO GO ON TRYING.
BUT I HAVE GIVEN UP ON LAUGHING.

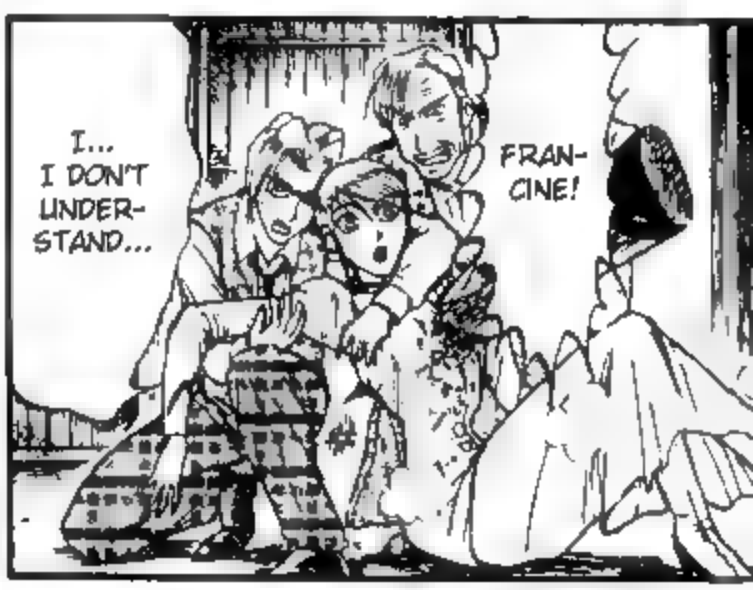

AND THERE IS NO NEED FOR THE SOFT STONE, EITHER.

SFX. KAPOW

SFX REPEATED IMPACTS

OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO KILL THE HUMAN WOMAN ... AND SEIZE THE SOFT STONE FROM HER BODY!
HAHAHAH! WHOOD THE HELL IS THIS CLOWN?!
WON'T OBEY MY ORDERS?!

BE QUIET! I CAN SEE THAT!
PLEASE BELIEVE ME... I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IS GOING ON...!


I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
FRANCINE!

SFX CLANG

ANGELINA, YOU TAKE ELEONORE AND GET OUT OF HERE! WE'LL HOLD THEM OFF!
GUY-KUN, GO AND GET OLYMPIA!

SFX: SQUEEZE
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YOU CAN'T FIGHT! I MADE IT SO THAT YOU HAVE NO MORE STRENGTH THAN A HUMAN!
FRAN-CINE …
L-LET ME… FIGHT AS WELL …
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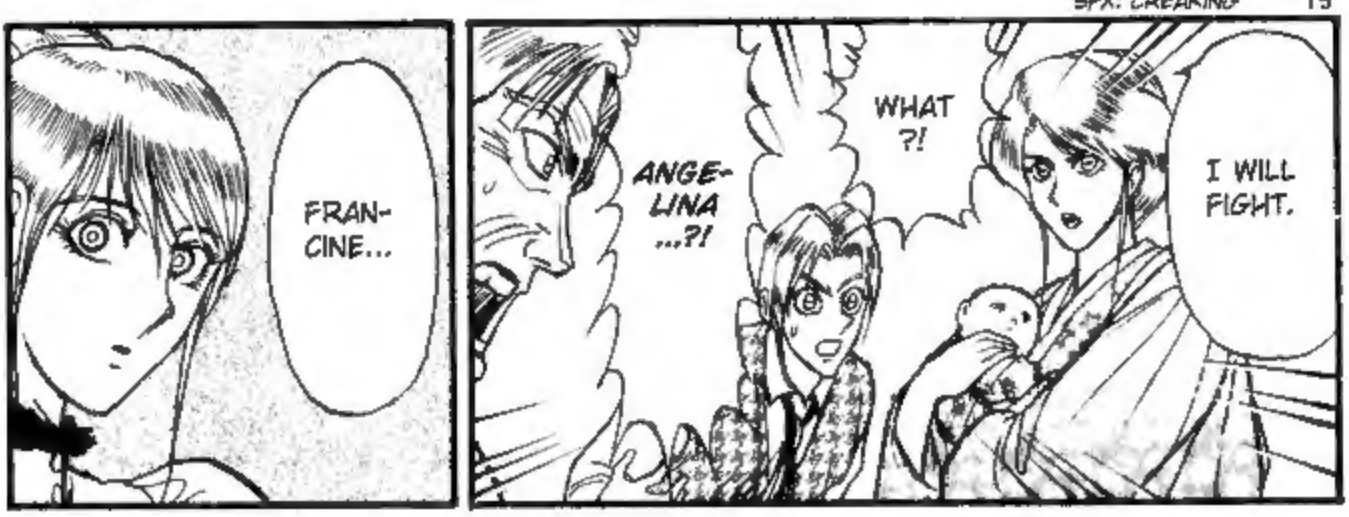
SFX: CREAKING


FRAN-CINE…
ANGE-LINA …?!
WHAT ?!
I WILL FIGHT.

AND THE SOFT STONE.
PLEASE TAKE CARE OF ELEO-NORE …

IS INSIDE ELEO-NORE?!
THE... THE SOFT STONE ...
WHA ...
AYE-AYE!
LET'S GO, YOU SLOBS!
SO TAKE THE BABY AND ESCAPE.
BUT YOU CAN NO LONGER PUT UP A FIGHT.
I CAN FIGHT WITH ARLE-QUIN.

YES.
DO YOU MEAN TO SAY ...
THAT YOU TRUST ME?

BE... A HAPPY GIRL...
THERE, THERE. BE A GOOD GIRL, ELEONORE.
FOR ALL WE KNOW, THIS WHOLE THING COULD BE SOME ELABORATE PLOT!
HOLD ON! WHY EXACTLY DO YOU TRUST THAT DOLL SO MUCH?!
!!
WE HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE RIGHT NOW.
I'M... GOING TO TRUST HER.

!
THIS WAY! GO, FRAN-CINE!
I... SUP-POSE WE'VE GOT TO...
KEEP ELEONORE SAFE!
GUY...
ONE LITTLE PIGGY'S GETTING AWAY!
I WILL!
NOT BY THE HAIR OF OUR CHINNY-CHIN-CHIN!